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Interrelationships between population, sustained economic growth and sustainable development

(Chapter III of the draft programme of action
of the Conference)

Text submitted by the Vice-Chairman (Mr. Lionel Hurst (Antigua and Barbuda)) (Working Group I) on the basis of negotiations held on document A/CONF.171/PC/5

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Chapter III

INTERRELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN POPULATION, SUSTAINED ECONOMIC GROWTH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A. [Integrating population and development strategies]

Basis for action

3.1. The everyday activities of all human beings, communities and countries are interrelated with population change, patterns and levels of use of natural resources, the state of the environment, and the pace and quality of economic and social development. There is general agreement that persistent widespread poverty as well as serious social and gender inequities have significant influences on, and are in turn influenced by, demographic parameters such as population growth, structure and distribution. There is also general agreement that unsustainable consumption and production patterns are contributing to the unsustainable use of natural resources and environmental degradation as well as to the reinforcement of social inequities and of poverty with the above-mentioned consequences for demographic parameters. The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21, adopted by the international community at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, call for patterns of development that reflect the new understanding of these and other intersectoral linkages. Recognizing the longer-term realities and implications of current actions, the development challenge is to meet the needs of present generations and improve their quality of life without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

3.2. Despite recent declines in birth rates in many countries, further large increases in population size are inevitable. Owing to the youthful age structure, for numerous countries the coming decades will bring substantial population increases in absolute numbers. Population movements within and between countries, including the very rapid growth of cities and the unbalanced regional distribution of population, will continue and increase in the future.

3.3. Sustainable development implies, inter alia, long-term sustainability in production and consumption relating to all economic activities including industry, energy, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, transport, tourism and infrastructure in order to optimize ecologically sound resource use and minimize waste. Macroeconomic and sectoral policies have, however, rarely given due attention to population considerations. Explicitly integrating population into economic and development strategies will both speed up the pace of sustainable development and poverty alleviation and contribute to the achievement of population objectives and an improved quality of life of the population.

Objectives

3.4. The objectives are to fully integrate population concerns into:

(a) Development strategies, planning, decision-making, and resource allocation at all levels and in all regions with the goal of meeting the needs, and improving the quality of life, of present and future generations;

(b) All aspects of development planning in order to promote social justice and to eradicate poverty through sustained economic growth in the context of sustainable development.

Actions

3.5. At the international, regional, national and local levels, population issues should be integrated into the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies and programmes relating to sustainable development. Development strategies must realistically reflect both the short-, medium- and long-term implications of, and consequences for, population dynamics as well as patterns of production and consumption.

3.6. Governments, international agencies, non-governmental organizations and other concerned parties should undertake timely and periodic reviews of their development strategies, with the aim of assessing progress towards integrating population into development and environment programmes that take into account patterns of production and consumption and seek to bring about population trends consistent with the achievement of sustainable development and the improvement of the quality of life.

3.7. Governments should establish the requisite internal institutional mechanisms and enabling environment, at all levels of society, to ensure that population factors are appropriately addressed within the decision-making and administrative processes of all relevant government agencies responsible for economic, environmental and social policies and programmes.

3.8. Political commitment to integrated population and development strategies should be strengthened by public education and information programmes and by increased resource allocation through cooperation among Governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, and by improvement of the knowledge base through research and national and local capacity-building.

3.8. bis To achieve sustainable development and a higher quality of life for all people, Governments should reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and promote appropriate demographic policies. Developed countries should take the lead in achieving sustainable consumption patterns and effective waste management.

B. [Population, sustained economic growth and poverty]

Basis for action

3.8. ter Population policies should take into account, as appropriate, development strategies agreed upon in multilateral forums, in particular the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade, 1/ the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the

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1/ General Assembly resolution 45/199, annex

1990s, 2/ the outcomes of the eighth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and of the Uruguay round of multilateral trade negotiations, Agenda 21 and the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. 3/

3.9. Gains recorded in recent years in such indicators as life expectancy and national product, while significant and encouraging, do not, unfortunately, fully reflect the realities of life of hundreds of millions of men, women, adolescents and children. Despite decades of development efforts, both the gap between rich and poor nations, and the inequalities within nations, have widened. Serious economic, social, gender and other inequities persist and hamper efforts to improve the quality of life for hundreds of millions of people. The number of people living in poverty stands at approximately 1 billion and continues to mount.

3.9. bis All countries, more especially developing countries where almost all of the future growth of the world population will occur, and countries with economies in transition, face increasing difficulties in improving the quality of life of their people in a sustainable manner. Many developing countries and countries with economies in transition face major development obstacles, among which are those related to the persistence of trade imbalances, the slow-down in the world economy, the persistence of the debt-servicing problem, and the need for technologies and external assistance. The achievement of sustainable development and poverty eradication should be supported by macroeconomic policies designed to provide an appropriate international economic environment, as well as by good governance, effective national policies and efficient national institutions.

3.10. Widespread poverty remains the major challenge to development efforts. Poverty is often accompanied by unemployment, malnutrition, illiteracy, low status of women, exposure to environmental risks and limited access to social and health services, [including reproductive health services and family planning]. All these factors contribute to high levels of fertility, morbidity, and mortality, as well as to low economic productivity. Poverty is also closely related to inappropriate spatial distribution of population, to unsustainable use and inequitable distribution of such natural resources as land and water, and to serious environmental degradation.

3.10. bis Efforts to slow down population growth, to reduce poverty, to achieve economic progress, to improve environmental protection, and to reduce unsustainable consumption and production patterns are mutually reinforcing. Slower population growth has in many countries bought more time to adjust to future population increases. This has increased those countries' ability to attack poverty, protect and repair the environment, and build the base for future sustainable development. Even the difference of a single decade in the transition to stabilization levels of fertility can have a considerable positive impact on quality of life.

2/ See Report of the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Paris, 3-14 September 1990 (A/CONF.147/18), part one.

3/ General Assembly resolution 46/151, annex, sect. II.

3.11. Sustained economic growth within the context of sustainable development is essential to eradicate poverty. Eradication of poverty will contribute to slowing population growth and to achieving early population stabilization. Investments in fields important to the eradication of poverty, such as basic education, sanitation, drinking water, housing, adequate food supply and infrastructure for rapidly growing populations, continue to strain already weak economies and limit development options. The unusually high number of young people, a consequence of high fertility rates, requires that productive jobs be created for a continually growing labour force under conditions of already widespread unemployment. The numbers of elderly requiring public support will also increase rapidly in the future. Sustained economic growth in the context of sustainable development will be necessary to accommodate these pressures.

3.12. (merge with 3.9. bis)

Objective

3.13. [The objective is to raise the quality of life for all people through adequate population and development policies and programmes aimed at achieving sustained economic growth in the context of sustainable development and sustainable patterns of consumption and production, poverty eradication, human resource development, the right to development and the guarantee of human rights.] As women are generally the poorest of the poor and at the same time key actors in the development process, eliminating social, cultural, political and economic discrimination against women is a prerequisite of eradicating poverty, promoting sustained economic growth in the context of sustainable development, ensuring quality family planning and reproductive health services, and achieving balance between population and available resources and sustainable patterns of consumption and production.

Actions

3.14. (now 3.10. bis)

3.15. Investment in human resource development, in accordance with national policy, must be given priority in population, and development strategies and budgets, at all levels, with programmes specifically directed at increased access to information, education, skill development, employment opportunities, both formal and informal, and high-quality general[, and sexual and reproductive] health services[, including family planning services], through the promotion of sustained economic growth in developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

3.16. (now 3.39)

3.17. Existing inequities and barriers to women in the workforce should be eliminated and women's participation in all policy-making and implementation, as well as their access to productive resources, and ownership of land, and their right to inherit property should be promoted and strengthened. Governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector should invest in, promote, monitor, and evaluate the education and skill development of women and girls and the legal and economic rights of women, and in all aspects of [reproductive and sexual] health, [including family planning], in order to enable them to

effectively contribute to and benefit from economic growth and sustainable development.

3.18. High priority should be given by Governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector to meeting the needs, and increasing the opportunities for information, education, jobs, skill development and [reproductive health services.], of all underserved members of society. 4/

3.18. bis Measures should be taken to strengthen food, nutrition and agricultural policies and programmes, and fair trade relations, with special attention to the creation and strengthening of food security at all levels.

3.19. Job creation in the industrial, agricultural and service sectors should be facilitated by Governments and the private sector through the establishment of more favourable climates for expanded trade and investment [on an environmentally sound basis. This will require creating and sustaining democratic institutions, good governance and transparency, curtailing corruption, and redirecting domestic budget priorities to the social sectors and human resource development.] Special efforts should be made to create productive jobs through policies promoting efficient, and where required, labour-intensive industries, and transfer of modern technologies.

3.20. [The international community should continue to promote a supportive economic environment, particularly for developing countries and countries with economies in transition in their attempt to achieve sustained economic growth and eradicate poverty. Efforts should be particularly addressed to further liberalizing trade policies, ameliorating the terms of trade of developing countries, reducing the debt burden, providing financial assistance, including the promotion of foreign direct investment as well as new and additional financial resources on preferential grant and concessional terms, and access to technologies, and ensuring that structural adjustment programmes are so designed and implemented as to be responsive to social and environmental concerns.]

C. Population and environment

Basis for action

3.21. At the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the international community agreed on objectives and actions aimed at integrating environment and development which were included in Agenda 21 and other international environmental agreements. Agenda 21 has been conceived as a response to the major environment and development challenges, including the economic and social dimensions of sustainable development, such as poverty, consumption, demographic dynamics, human health and human settlement, and to a broad range of environmental and natural resource concerns. Agenda 21 leaves to the International Conference on Population and Development further consideration of the interrelationships between population and the environment.

4/ Children, adolescents, women, the aged, the disabled, indigenous peoples, rural populations, urban populations, migrants, refugees, displaced persons and slum-dwellers.

3.22. Meeting the basic human needs of growing populations is dependent on a healthy environment. These human dimensions need to be given attention in developing comprehensive policies for sustainable development in the context of population growth.

3.23. Demographic factors, combined with poverty and lack of access to resources in some areas, and excessive consumption and wasteful production patterns in others, cause or exacerbate problems of environmental degradation and resource depletion and thus inhibit sustainable development.

3.24. Pressure on the environment may result from rapid population growth, distribution and migration, especially in ecologically vulnerable ecosystems. Urbanization and policies that do not recognize the need for rural development also create environmental problems.

3.25. Implementation of effective population policies in the context of sustainable development[, including reproductive health and family planning programmes,] require new forms of participation by various actors at all levels in the policy-making process.

Objectives

3.26. Consistent with Agenda 21, the objectives are:

(a) To ensure that population, environmental and poverty eradication factors are integrated in sustainable development policies, plans and programmes;

(b) To reduce both unsustainable consumption and production patterns as well as negative impacts of demographic factors on the environment in order to meet the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Actions

3.27. Governments at the appropriate level, with the support of the international community and regional and subregional organizations, should formulate and implement population policies and programmes to support the objectives and actions agreed upon in Agenda 21 and other international environmental agreements, taking into account the common but differentiated responsibilities reflected in those agreements. Consistent with the framework and priorities set forth in Agenda 21, the following actions, inter alia, are recommended to help achieve population and environment integration:

(a) Integrate demographic factors into environment impact assessments and other planning and decision-making processes aimed at achieving sustainable development;

(b) Take measures aimed at the eradication of poverty, with special attention to income generation and employment strategies directed at the rural poor and those living within or on the edge of fragile ecosystems;

(c) Utilize demographic data to promote sustainable resource management, especially of ecologically fragile systems;

(d) Modify unsustainable consumption and production patterns through economic, legislative and administrative measures, as appropriate, aimed at fostering sustainable resource use and preventing environmental degradation;

(e) Implement policies to address the ecological implications of inevitable future increases in population numbers and changes in concentration and distribution, particularly in ecologically vulnerable areas and urban agglomerations.

3.28. Measures should be taken to enhance the full participation of all relevant groups, especially women, at all levels of population and environmental decision-making to achieve sustainable management of natural resources.

3.29. Research should be undertaken on the linkages among population, consumption and production, the environment and natural resources, and human health as a guide to effective sustainable development policies.

3.30. Governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector should promote public awareness and understanding for the implementation of the above-mentioned actions.

[D. Population, education and sustainable development

Basis for action

3.31. In the last 20 years, the world has experienced a rise in educational levels. Although the differences in educational attainment between males and females have shrunk, 75 per cent of illiterate persons in the world are women. Flaws in basic education and in the literacy of adults continue to inhibit the development process in every area. The world community has a special responsibility to ensure that all children receive an education of improved quality and that they complete primary school. Education is an indispensable tool for the improvement of the quality of life. However, it is more difficult to meet educational needs when there is rapid population growth.

3.32. Education is a key factor in sustainable development: it is at the same time a component of well-being and a factor in the development of well-being through its links with demographic as well as economic and social factors. Education is also a means to enable the individual to gain access to knowledge, which is a precondition for coping, by anyone wishing to do so, with today's complex world. The reduction of fertility and mortality rates, the empowerment of women, the improvement in the quality of the working population and the promotion of genuine political democracy are largely assisted by progress in education. The integration of migrants is also facilitated by universal access to education.

3.33. The relationship between education and demographic and social changes is one of interdependence. The relationships among education, marriage age, fertility, mortality, mobility and activity are complex. The increase in the

education of women and girls contributes to greater empowerment of women, to a postponement of the age of marriage and to a reduction in the size of families. When mothers are better educated, their children's survival rate tends to increase. Broader access to education is also a factor in internal migration and the make-up of the working population.

3.34. The education and training of young people prepare them for professional life. It is on the content and nature of the training received that the prospects of first-time job seekers and their mid-career retraining possibilities depend. Discrepancies between the educational system and the production system lead to graduate unemployment, a devaluing of qualifications and, in some cases, an exodus of qualified people. It is therefore essential to promote a good adaptation of the education system to the economic and social systems, and vice versa.

Objectives

3.35. The objectives are:

(a) To achieve universal access to quality education, with particular priority being given to primary education, to combat illiteracy and to eliminate gender disparities in educational access and support;

(b) To improve the content of the curriculum so as to promote greater awareness on health issues, including reproductive and sexual health, and gender equity as well as the interrelationships between population and sustainable development.

Actions

3.36. (former 3.16) The eradication of illiteracy is one of the prerequisites of human development. All countries should consolidate the progress made in the 1990s towards providing universal access to primary education, as agreed upon at the World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, notably in ensuring universal access to primary education. All countries should further strive to ensure the complete access to primary school or an equivalent level of education by both girls and boys as quickly as possible, and in any case before the year 2015. Attention should also be given to the quality and type of education. Countries that will have achieved the goal of universal primary education [sooner] are urged to extend education to, and facilitate access to and completion of education at, secondary school levels.

3.37. Investments in education and job training should be given high priority in development budgets at all levels.

3.38. (former 4.20) Countries should take affirmative steps to keep girls in school at least through early adolescence, by building more community schools, training more female teachers, and by providing scholarships or, where essential, other monetary incentives that help compensate parents for the loss of girls' labour, all with the aim of closing the gender gap in secondary school education by the year 2015. Countries should also supplement those efforts by making full use of non-formal and other appropriate education opportunities.

3.39. (former 11.14) To be most effective, education about population issues must begin in primary school and continue through all levels of formal and non-formal education. Where such programmes already exist, curricula should be reviewed, updated and broadened with a view to ensuring adequate coverage of important concerns such as gender sensitivity, reproductive choices and responsibilities, and sexually transmitted diseases, including human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS). To ensure acceptance of population education programmes by the community, population education projects should emphasize consultation with parents and community leaders.]